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602 606 mutual avoidance. He cannot speak to her; she cannot speak to him. He does not look at her; she does not look at him. They do not hand any article to each other or use each other's names. Should they meet on a path they each turn aside and walk past with their eyes averted. There is no direct contact between the two, except in very unusual cases or in times of great emotion, such as during a fight, when a man or a woman is not aware of what he is doing. Their whole relationship is an indirect one.

602 867 A child before circumcision is exempt from the avoidance rules because he is considered too young to understand them. After this he is told to observe all of them in his relationship with all his mokul. A young mokul is also told at an early age that she must observe all the taboos surrounding gurrong. If a mokul has become very old it is possible to talk to her, receive food, and be near her, but the relationship is always most formal and reserved.

602 753 606 Should a mokul or gurrong disobey any of the taboos unwittingly (it would happen in no other way), a sore or large swelling would appear in the groin of the offender. Several persons were so afflicted, and all their tribesmen believed them to have broken this taboo and to be suffering the penalty.

602 606 Mokul and gurrong may be near each other around the same fire. An observer would not notice their avoidance unless aware of the custom and the relationship of the individuals; it then becomes quite marked.

602 606 431 This taboo does not imply any animosity between the two, their indirect relationship usually being most pleasant. A man is proud of his mokul and boasts of her kindness to him. She always sends him food and her most prized possessions through her daughter, and he sends presents to her through his wife. She, too, is equally proud of her gurrong, and tells of his many kindnesses to her.

602 606 [586] If a man's galle misbehaves, mokul would always help him discipline her. Only in cases of extreme cruelty would the wife's mother take her part against the husband. If a gurrong is neglectful of his duty in giving presents to his parents-in-law, there is always a chance that, during the early part of a marriage before there are any children, the daughter will be taken away from him. The mokul takes a prominent part in this action, for she feels that he must look out for her.

A mokul who misbehaved herself as a wife to gawel would find her gurrong against her and he would help gawel punish her.

For a full appreciation of her relationship to gurrong, it is neces-

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462 562 561 between the women's restricted social participation in such parts of the culture as ritual and myth and their simple technological behavior. Technological behavior obviously is connected with the age-grading situation in Murngin society. It is impossible to say which causes which—both are part of the male-female social dichotomy. There can be no question, however, but that the general profane participation of the women in the technological and economic life of the people is just as restricted when it comes to participating in the more elaborate and highly skilled technical processes as it is in the ritual of the tribe; and that the men's highly developed participation in Murngin ritual finds its counterpart in their greater participation in economic and technological processes which demand a greater degree of manual dexterity and skill and are far more complex techniques. The most elaborate and only complex technique a woman uses is that of making baskets. All other processes which she uses are comparatively simple, with the possible exception of helping to construct some of the bark houses. The same is true of her economic behavior. The digging of yams, the gathering of shells, of roots, of fruit, are probably the simplest of all the economic processes found in Murngin society. It is with these things she is chiefly engaged. Among men the harpooning of turtles—which includes such elaborate technical background as the making of a canoe, its sailing and proper use, the construction of the harpoon and its use—is probably at the maximum end of Murngin technological complexity. As a boy grows up his participation in the use of these techniques grows, paralleled by his ritual growth.

561 In other words, as he generally extends his social personality further into the group in his daily life, he is, at definite intervals, admitted into a deeper understanding of the religious life. If in no other way, he becomes aware of this by being part of the group which forces the younger men through these same rites. He realizes that he enters many of the ceremonies as a part of his older age group, and that he is becoming part of the Python spirit, as when he gives his blood to the Python's Djungguan rite or when he dances with the sacred blood on him. This identification with the essential holiness or final sacred power necessitates, he realizes, careful conduct and a minute regulation of his daily behavior, for he risks profaning this spirit within himself and resultant sickness or death. The best medicine man among the Murngin told several of his patients that Muit was angry and had made them sick because they failed to see the Gunabibi through to its conclusion—an affront to the Python. The men's group separates

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macerated and placed in the pool. Some of the writer's informants claim that a poison grass is used similarly.

A fish is cut in halves the long way and cooked immediately because it is believed that if a bit old when eaten it causes leprosy (but see Magic, page 207).

Oysters, periwinkles, and the many varieties of bivalves gathered by the women are cooked on the shore at the spot where they are collected. A fire is made over stones and the shellfish put on the hot stones and embers. The shells open or crack and the flesh is removed and eaten by the women or placed in small receptacles to be carried home to the men.

Honey is gathered by both sexes, but usually by men. When a hive is discovered in a hollow tree that is not too large the tree is cut down and the trunk split open. The honey is usually eaten where found. Gathering honey is a painless task in Australia because the native bees are stingless. The honey is often put in a water-tight basket, mixed with water and drunk as a beverage. It is never allowed to ferment; the natives have no intoxicating drink. The wax is formed into a ball and put in the men's baskets to be used in the construction of various implements.

Pandanus fruit, ripening about August, is cut up into fine pieces and cooked. The small cabbage palm is gathered about the same time, the whole trunk of the plant being cooked and beaten on a log, and the glutinous product eaten. Spear grass is chewed by the children as well as the other people.

Cycad palm nuts are gathered from the center of the trees by the women with the aid of a forked stick placed against the trunk to make a rough ladder. The nuts are knocked off with a club if they are too high to reach. The outside skin is removed and the kernels are placed in a large basket which is submerged in a fresh-water pool and allowed to remain several days until the poisonous qualities of the green fruit are removed. Sometimes the women first heat the nuts, thus reducing the time for soaking them.

Several varieties of tree grubs are eaten. Both men and women gather them. They select trees which have the proper indications upon them, split open the trunk, and remove the grubs which are washed and eaten raw. They look much like the entrail of a fowl and taste much like a snail.

The nests of all the larger birds are robbed and the eggs eaten. During the proper season the various sea birds lay their eggs in great

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CHAPTER VII

MURNGIN MAGIC AND MEDICINE

DESCRIPTION OF MURNGIN MAGIC, WITH DETAILED DATA

A. Introduction

Among all the clans of the eight tribes and all the members of the groups there is a profound belief in magic. The effects of its power are twofold: it can harm and destroy, or it can benefit and cure. Among the northern clans of the Murngin and Yaernungo tribes there is a belief in magic but there are no magicians of any kind, while among the southern and more western tribes magicians, both evil and good, are found everywhere. The "black" magician (sorcerer) can injure or kill his victim, and the "white" magician can cure him or restore his lost faculties. All deaths, sicknesses, certain types of bad luck, and, in general, all those occasions on which the individual is seriously out of adjustment with his community, physically, mentally, or socially, are looked upon as the effects of black magic; and in almost every case except that of soul-stealing the white magician is called in to remedy the situation.[1] There is here a kind of warfare between the forces which do good and those which do harm to man. The latter are related to an organized set of concrete techniques embodied in the person of the black magician, while an entirely different set gives practical expression, in the personality of the white magician, to those forces which control the effects of black magic. The struggle then becomes a warfare between these two types of magical personalities. This does not mean that they are necessarily enemies, though they usually are; furthermore, a black magician is not looked upon by all men as fearsome: to those of his own group he is a constant source of strength, since they seek his aid in repaying a wrong done to them by another group.

Occasionally when a very old person dies the diagnosis is, "It was nothing, just old age"; but this is very rare. Among some of the magical causes are: the machinations of an evil magician; possession by an

[1] Whenever a magician, black or white, is called upon, payment must be made to him.

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son (or persons) who is interested in destroying another mixes up a number of colors and paints the image of his intended victim on a large stone. The head represents that of the man, the nose and ears are kangaroo's, the arms, fingers and legs a human being's, the foot kangaroo's, the scrotum a man's, and the penis kangaroo's. During the period of painting, the man or men talk to the image, saying, "You will kill So and So." The name of the victim is pronounced. When the image is completed the magicians gather a large quantity of firewood and place it underneath the stone and around it, light it, and while the blaze burns they talk to it: "You must let us know by and by when you break, Stone, you must let us know when you make that popping noise when you break." The fire burns, and the stone becomes so heated that it finally breaks. Meanwhile the men who have painted the image watch and listen. When the stone finally breaks they know that the soul of their victim, who may be far away, will scream in pain "Ya-kai! Ya-kai!" because the soul and heart of the man have been affected in exactly the same way as the stone; the men who have painted the image can always hear the man cry out.

It is believed that in two or three days after the stone breaks the victim will wake up from his sleep and feel very weak and ill, that his body will swell up, his ears grow large and his nose run with blood, that his elbows and nails will split and his skin and testes crack. The man will walk around one year or more before he dies. The men who have done the killing tell of it after a time, saying, "We did this thing for him, we killed him." The news travels and soon everyone knows it. Gradually the living man's fingers slough off, and in time he dies.

From the above description of how image magic affects its victims it can be discerned that leprosy is felt to result from this variety of sorcery. The relatives of a man who has died of leprosy always feel that they must retaliate, for they believe that members of an enemy clan have caused the disease—despite the fact that the victim may have eaten stale fish (see page 144).

Singing Magic.—The Murngin believe that certain songs are the most deadly of all magic. Three men were spoken of as singing magicians, all of them being trusted informants of mine. Not one of them would admit that he had this ability. It was my belief that they were telling the truth. Possibly the tribes farther south use some sort of singing death magic, but I collected no evidence in proof of this. There is no question but that everyone is extremely afraid of it. All warned me not

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754 to attempt to have anyone sing it for me, since it was too dangerous and would be likely to kill me. This was said even by the men who were willing and anxious to demonstrate the sorcery which removed the soul by the opening of the heart.

If a man who has sung another suddenly changes his mind and wishes to save him, he can swim out into the water at daylight, wash himself, return to the shore, and paint himself with red ocher. But it is insisted that if the singer did not swim and paint himself his victim would surely die. According to the natives the far-off country to the south is where all the people sing this death magic against the men of the north. This region to the south is no definite place. It is here "that stones walk like men." "These stones walk around and sing these songs, and men follow and listen and learn them and sing them and make the men in the north sick."

One of the most deadly songs is the whitefish song. The breath of its victim comes rapidly and very hard, which means that the fish has eaten out the insides of the person. The tide regulates the time of the death. When it comes in, the victim becomes extremely ill, his heart beats very fast, and everyone says, "Who has done this and who has sung this song?" When the tide goes out again, the person becomes a little stronger, and when it has reached its lowest ebb he feels almost normal. As the tide comes in the victim becomes sicker and continues to grow weaker until at full tide he dies.

753 754 Balliman's sister was very ill with bronchial pneumonia. Everyone knew she had been "sung" by the whitefish song because she continued to expectorate and vomit. When she became sick the tide was well in; when it went out she got better. Ultimately, in spite of this extremely strong magic, she recovered. During the crisis there was talk about everyone's being forced to go in swimming in order that the old men could see who had done the singing by observing those who refused to go in: they would be guilty. Nothing came of the talk. Although the woman was supposed to die from this powerful magic and everyone was certain she had been sung, there seemed to be no criticism of the belief after it had failed to operate.

826 828 732 *Possession by a Mokoi.*—The Murngin believe that deafness, dumbness, and insanity are due to possession of the afflicted one by a mokoi. Other illnesses are also caused by the entrance of a mokoi into the head of the victim. There were two deaf and dumb men in the group, one of them a near imbecile, the other mentally normal. The first had to be watched and taken care of by all the others in order to remain

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alive, while the second provided for himself and was treated like any other man except that he talked and was spoken to by a sign language. The relatives of these two assume that mokois had entered their heads and that some day they would be led out into the bush, where someone would steal their souls, for "plenty of crazy men have been killed that way." It is thought that when these men were babies a dog had walked over the body of the more normal one a few times but had then been kicked out of the way; while the dog had walked over the other one several times, thus making him much more insane. "That one [the normal one]," said his brother, "when he was a baby a dog walked over him once and maybe twice. That made it so he couldn't hear or talk. I think that other one had a dog walk over him five or six times before his mother kicked that dog. I think that when the mother of that first boy kicked that dog he yelped and that is the reason he is not silly like that other crazy man. That other dog just went 'Unh' and didn't call out, and that is the reason his head is no good."

Image Whipping.—Another form of magic is to draw an image and then go over the whole of the body, naming each part and using the name of the intended victim. The image is then whipped with strings. This will cause a man's body to rot to pieces, and it is supposed to have killed several men among the various tribes in northeastern Arnhem Land.

Dreaming and Magic.—A bad dream can also cause sickness. Dreams of an open grave, of a recently dead man, or of the totemic emblem are among those which cause a man to rise from his sleep, build up his fire, put a branch of green leaves in the fire until it is smoking, brush himself off, and, if it seems to have been a particularly unpleasant dream, brush off the members of his immediate family.

Excretion and Magic.—There is a certain amount of fear among the Murngin that excreta or waste food products will be picked up by an enemy sorcerer and used to inflict sickness upon them. The belief, however, is not very strong, since no great care is exercised to hide this matter so that it cannot be used by the sorcerers. A man, however, before urinating or defecating, digs a hole and squats over it. He is seldom seen standing while urinating. Women squat too, but when in the bush put their hands on their knees and bend their knees slightly while remaining partially upright.

If there is a particular fear of magic, fish bones, kangaroo bones,

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in the chest. We don't feel well. Please, Munyiryir, help us.' I went then and took a shell and filled it with water and washed my hands. I felt over their chests and took out a bone and showed them. A man came from another country. He had a sore back. He said, 'I can't walk.' I looked from a long way and I saw that little hard thing inside him. I blew on his back and this thing came out a long way. I showed it to him. The other man went hunting for kangaroo then and his back didn't hurt him and he was very pleased.

"'Those two spirits sit down on my shoulders. Sometimes they sit on my head. I call them my children. Sometimes they used to come to me in the night. They would say, 'There is a man sick over there.'

"In the early morning I would say, 'Where is that man?' and they would show me and they would say, 'He has got something inside him,' and they would show me where. Sometimes I used to take bushes and brush against the man and now blow on him and that hard thing would fall a long way from him.

"When I first started some of the people said, 'You are lying and not telling the truth.' I said to them, 'You look in my mouth.' I opened my mouth and let them see I had nothing in there."

A Case Record of Willidjungo's Treatments and Cures.—A Birkili clansman had an ache in his back. Willidjungo was called. He gave him the usual rubbing treatment, found the place that was painful, and removed a small stick. This had been placed within him, said Willidjungo, "by a mokoi. This mokoi was a swallow which swooped down over the camp. This bird is the mokoi of some very old dead person. He was angry because the victim had a yam stick in his possession that was owned by a Burera tribesman." The Burera are somewhat distant people from the Birkili and they are looked upon with extreme suspicion as great sorcerers by the tribes to the east of them. The mokoi, according to Willidjungo, had definitely tried to kill his patient. The mokois at times act in the rôle of vampire, since they can definitely attack a living man and make him ill or take away his good sense (make him insane).

Munyiryir, a former magician, had a very heavy cold in his lungs, which might have been a slight touch of pneumonia. After he had suffered a few days with it he called Willidjungo to treat him. Willidjungo brought his paraphernalia, including the spirit bag, a container of water, and, of course, his familiars. He removed a pointed stick from Munyiryir's side. He informed him that it was caused by an old mokoi. This mokoi came in the middle of the night and stood near their two camps (their huts were close together). In the middle of the night Willidjungo awakened his two wives and told them to look at the mokoi, which was standing by a tamarind tree. Both of them said that they had seen this ghost. When

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the ghost left, Willidjungo went back to sleep and the ghost went up to Munyiryir's and pushed the stick inside him. This was done because the victim had been given a ranga a long time back and had not returned the present to the owner of the totem.

Mahkarolla had been ill for a number of days with a very bad ache in his back which made him bend over to such an extent that he could not walk. He was in extreme pain. A number of years before he had fallen from a tree which had paralyzed his lower limbs for a short time. He sent for Willidjungo to treat him. Willidjungo arrived. He walked around him in a rather stately manner until he had covered a course of about a half circle. He then walked over to his patient, got down on his knees beside him and asked him to lie on his stomach. He washed his hands, took a mouthful of water and washed his mouth out and spat it on the ground. He felt all over the body with his fingers while examining the back carefully. He then rubbed his hand under his own armpit and again applied his hands to Mahkarolla's back. He massaged it carefully. He then removed the spirit bag from his head and rubbed it under each arm and against his head, then applied it to Mahkarolla's head and buttocks. The rubbing continued. Soon it was localized to one spot. The doctor then bent over his patient and put his mouth to the spot, in the lower part of his back. He blew against the place where the illness was supposed to be located, then sucked. He raised his mouth and spat. He spat again. He put his hand to his mouth and brought out a small stick about three inches in length and about the size of a small match in diameter. It looked like a large darning needle. Willidjungo diagnosed the case as due to a wrong that had been done his familiars, who had struck at Mahkarolla. There was probably more to it; but unfortunately this occurred when I first arrived in the field and I did not get all the details. Within two or three hours after this treatment the patient was well and walking around. He claimed that he felt all right.

Mahkarolla paid Willidjungo a stick of tobacco and some nut bread for the treatment. There must always be a payment made for a treatment by a magician.

Munyiryir, although he had been an excellent doctor and had cured a large number of people, suddenly lost his power because he unintentionally disobeyed the taboo, which, if broken, always destroys a doctor's familiars. This occurred within a few months before my arrival with the Murngin.

"I had been down," he said, "to the ocean. It was on the Goyder River side of Millingimbi Island. Those doctors of mine were sitting on my head and shoulders. I was out in a canoe standing in it when another canoe

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attitude, since the belief in the curative power of this ritual unifies the point of view of all the members. The magician, while healing, is usually watched by a number of the near and far kinsmen. They all express great satisfaction in his removal of the sickness (the foreign object) and an affirmation of the victim's cure, as do the magician and the victim.

An Examination of the Social Configuration of Magic in the South

The Part Ritual Plays as a "Magical" Instrument in the South.— Ritual can cause sickness and death as well as prevent them. When the great ceremonies such as Gunabibi, Djungguan, Ulmark and Narras are being performed, any breaking of the tribal laws is considered exceedingly dangerous and likely to cause sickness among the totemic group. If totems are hidden within the men's camp and a fight is started, or if illegal sexual relations occur, or if in some way the clan feels its totems have been profanely treated, there is general indignation and a certain amount of fear that members will become ill.

A Narra ceremony was being celebrated by some clans of the Yiritja moiety and during the preliminary part a totem was being made when a fight broke out in the camp among some of the male members because a husband believed that his wife had been having illicit relations with another man. The owners of the totem felt not only that they and their totem had been insulted but also that they were likely to become ill from the fighting and the breaking of the tribal laws.

A shark totem was hidden by a member of the Djirin clan in a hollow tree on the edge of the men's ceremonial grounds. Some women from a distant group passed near it. The owner of the totem followed their tracks and accused their husbands of not watching their women carefully. While he stood with his clansmen back of him, all of them holding their spears in readiness for fighting, he said that it was an insult not only to him and his clan but also to his totemic emblem; that it meant sickness for him or that he might be speared in the next fight he got into.

Two men were caught in illicit sexual relations with two women not their wives while several totemic emblems were on the Narra ground. The Liagaomir clan had their great fire ranga ready for the Narra ceremony. When the leader of this clan heard what had happened he expressed great indignation. He said, "Let us take them down there to our Narra ground, those men and those women, and let us show them our ranga and then kill them. Let them see first what they have done." The women were severely beaten by everybody including their brothers and sisters. The

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leader felt that all the clan had been endangered by this profaneness and that they might all become ill.

At other times the lack of participation in sexual intercourse will cause sickness to the man who fails and possibly to others in a group. Sometimes young and bashful men refuse to enter into the ritualistic sexual intercourse which ends the Gunabibi. It is believed that they will be sick. In his account of his first participation in the Gunabibi old Dorng said the following about his embarrassment: "My brother [distant] said to me at this time, 'You go play with my wife.' I said, 'No.' He said, 'You will be sick and maybe die if you don't play with her.'" Often the women who are to be the sexual partners of young men send word to the men that they must come and stay with them or that the young man's refusal will cause both partners to be ill.

Sometimes improper participation in a ceremony will also cause illness. Willidjungo, the medicine man, diagnosed my lame leg as caused by my not seeing all of a certain Gunabibi ceremony, which had caused the great snake to be sorry and angry with me. This diagnosis occurred in similar cases with several of the natives.

Mistreatment of ceremonial objects connected with the celebration of a great ritual can also cause illnesses. During the Gunabibi some of the feather headpieces of the leader, Ilkara, disappeared and from the indications left it appeared that a wildcat had eaten them. The young men supposed to guard these things and remain on the ceremonial ground during the night had failed in their duty. Ilkara became ill and had to have a doctor remove a large bone from his side which appeared because of this neglect of his totemic paraphernalia.

Baldness is a term of reproach among the Murngin. A man who becomes bald considers it a calamity. One man among the group was partially bald. His people believed that his condition was due to his making too many totemic emblems and giving them to other men in return for presents; in other words, he was mistreating his totem. There was no evidence that he traded his totemic emblems any more frequently than did any of the other men of the group.

Women sometimes suffer innocently from the power of the ceremonial blood smeared on the men during the Djungguan and Gunabibi ceremonies. Dundir's leg had two small infections about the size of a thumb nail. Her husband said that she could not go hunting for grubs because she was ill. "She picked cotton off me over at Rabuma when

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we circumcised those young men. That blood made her sick." One old man spoke up and said, "That blood made her sick. It makes women ill when they touch us after the Djungguan. It is the spirit in that blood that does this. It is the totem, not the wooden emblem, but the spirit inside with the power name. He is in that blood. A woman cannot touch it or it will make her sick." 753 826 784

Smaller rituals are performed by two or three individuals to cure someone who is ailing. Frequently women rub red ocher over their bodies because of an ailment, this being but an abbreviation of its use in the larger ceremonies. Red ocher string is tied around the head or body to cure a headache or abdominal pain. This act, too, is but a shortening of the ritual in which decorated string is placed around the head or body in the larger ceremonies. 755

Larger rituals are definitely used to remove pain. Certain parts of the Djungguan are designed to take away the pain from the boy who is being circumcised. The women relatives whip themselves in order to transfer the pain from the boy to themselves. The head of the boy's penis, they also say, is a turtle's head, so the cutting of the foreskin cannot hurt him since it is not his flesh being cut but that of the animal. These statements are also supposed to remove the pain from the boy. 785 826 831

Other rituals, which assure success in war, are demonstrably only elaborated magical practices. The gaingar spears represent the head of the Dua and Yiritja moieties. The souls of the dead of the moieties are supposed to be in each weapon. The ceremonial throwing of the spears to assure the killing of an enemy and to prevent the killing of their own men is definitely of a magical nature, the power of these ceremonies depending upon the souls' clustering around the spear just as the power of the magical killing stick depends upon the souls which cluster about its point. 778 789 775

The bone magic ceremony used in the maringo fighting (see Chapter VI, Warfare) is also an elaborate ceremony focused upon the magical idea of the soul's being associated with a bone relic. In earlier parts of this chapter the individual treats the bone in a ceremonial way to practice his magic against his enemies. Both the gaingar and the maringo ceremony from one point of view are elaborate magical practices participated in by the group and led by the ceremonial or war leader.

All the rituals, particularly the Narra, which celebrates the ascendancy of the clan totem, are commonly used to purify the group of 751 783

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and outsiders are then allowed to enter the camp itself. The mother of the dead individual paints herself with red ocher, as does the female mari of the person. This is to remove the taboo from them so that they can go out and gather fire wood and water as well as food. Before that time they must stay in the camp. The mother is not supposed to paint herself before the grave post is put up. If she does, and puts water on herself to make the red ocher spread, the body of the dead person will not decompose but stay firm so that the bones cannot be painted and properly treated. "The mother that belongs to that dead man cries every night for him. She cries a long time, maybe until one rain is over. All the people go back now to take out that dead man. They take the paper bark off his body. It has a very strong smell. Some people don't like to see that, but some people have strong hearts. We keep the young people away and the women do not look."

Exhumation of the Bones.—After a minimum of two or three months or a maximum of a season the body is exhumed under the direction of the father or some near relative of the dead man. If it is a child and has been buried beside the house, the father pulls the house down and makes a windbreak with it. The women relatives sit on one side of the windbreak and men on the other. They sit so that the wind blows between the male and female lines. At the head of the grave a small fire is built out of wet material so that it will smoke. The smoking fire, with the aid of a strong wind, prevents the stench from being too heavy. It is believed that no one should walk through the smoke that comes from the fires and grave, for the stench of the dead would make him ill. The fires are lit not only to kill the smell of decaying flesh but also so that the wind won't blow the odor a great distance, for it is believed that the stench is consumed by the smoke. The windbreak acts as a screen in front of the women so that they cannot see what is taking place. If an adult is being disinterred the screen is placed in the same way, but the material is not from the house of the parents. The mokul bapa (father's sister) can and does sit on the side of the men.

Strips of paper bark are made ready on which to place the bones. The bark is cut into sections. The inside sections of the stringy-bark tree are broken into handfuls of waste with which to clean the bones, and water is brought in large melon shells.

The men sing the garma cycle of songs while the women dance to a monotonous syncopated rapid rhythm: alternately one arm touches the head, and the hand of the other arm is lowered to the abdo-

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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sisters. After all the sacred drama had been enacted by them and they had been swallowed by the Great Father and taken down into the holy waters in the lower depths of the totem well, the Wawilak men arrived and saw the scene of the tremendous struggle in which the Wawilak sisters had used all of the sacred rituals they knew to prevent their being defeated by the great python. The men, who had been searching for the sisters, went to sleep there that night and during the night they dreamed. In the dream their Wawilak sisters returned and taught them all of the sacred ceremonies that they had sung and danced before being taken down into the sacred water hole. The souls of the Wawilak men were the beings who experienced and first learned these ceremonies and transmitted them through the dream to the mundane bodies of the men, and from them the knowledge of how to perform correctly the great ceremonies was passed on from generation to generation to the present day.

Most of the dreams experienced by the Murngin are felt to be of a dangerous character and sometimes directly responsible for causing illnesses. Whenever a man has had a dream of this description he immediately builds up his fire and goes through the leaf (warntdjer) ceremony to chase away any evil which might have come with the dream, either in the form of the soul of a dead man, the power of some great totem, or because of associated images with the totem of the dead, as, for example, in the dream of an open grave or of a man with ceremonial blood upon him. If the dream is of the pronouncedly dangerous variety the man, when he awakens, may put his whole family through the warntdjer ceremony to make sure that the stronger evil has been removed. Dreams are definitely associated with black magic, for at times it is difficult for a man to determine which is dream and which is waking reality. Occasionally a man will have a dream in which he sees himself being subjected to sorcery; he awakens and believes the dream to have been something that happened to him in his waking experience.

Munyiryir's brother declared that Kimingmulu had attempted to steal his soul. He said that two or three nights before he made his accusation he was lying asleep with his wife in his camp on Pudjeriki Island when just before morning someone came along and stepped on his foot. He was dreaming at the time. He did not think this was part of his dream but that someone was trying to steal his soul. When he awakened he looked to see who had stepped on him because he thought that someone was trying to get hold of him to put a log on him. He followed the tracks that were near him and discovered them to be Kimingmulu's. He said nothing to the suspected sorcerer but talked the matter over with his brothers and other near relatives. The man he accused was a member of a group with whom his clan had had strained relations. After careful interviewing it became clear that Munyiryir's brother did not know which was dream and which was actuality, but that his seeing the tracks of one who belonged to a pos-

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
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Magic and Disease.

The exercise of magic is also believed to be the cause of epidemic and other diseases. One man known to me is suffering from leprosy in an advanced form, and the belief is that his condition is the result of magic directed in the following way:—The man who desired to injure him, because of a quarrel over an aboriginal woman, first of all built a rude bark hut. On the inside of the bark a grotesque figure was drawn, to which was given the name of the victim. The hut was then fired, and, as it burned, this man is said to have "sung" his victim, expressing the desire that as the fire destroyed the figure on the bark, so disease would destroy the other man. 753 754

When an epidemic of measles broke out at Goulburn Island, the cause was looked for locally, and one of the old men supplied the following explanation:—Some time previously a man had died of injuries received in a tribal quarrel. That death had never been avenged, so two of his tribal brothers made their way to a spot on the mainland which is associated with the activities of their tribal ancestors, and so is tabu. Taking some damp earth from this spot, these men lit a fire, in which stones were heated, the sacred earth being then placed on the heated stones, and the whole covered with paper-bark.

As the smoke and steam emerged, these men danced round the fire, and, addressing the smoke, requested it to go over to the island and smite the people there with sickness and death, as punishment for the killing of their brother. Proof that it did so is for these people found in the fact that disease came, and a number sickened and died.

The coming of whooping cough to our Milingimbi Station is explained in a similar way. Near to this station is another of these places sacred to two mythological female ancestors. Legend has it that at this spot these women were seized with a serious coughing complaint, and, ejecting the sputum, remarked, "We will leave this sickness here for future inhabitants of this place." A man, who is believed to have had a grudge against certain of our station people, is said to have first cut down a milk-wood tree at this sacred spot, and to have reduced it to small chips. He next stooped over these chips, coughing and spitting, until he fell exhausted. On recovering, he placed these prepared chips on a [778]

753 754 fire, and, as the smoke ascended, he asked it to carry this coughing sickness to these people.

754 756 In this aboriginal community are men known as Gulung, or "Marrngit," who exercise magic in a curative or preventive way. Their chief function is to discover and combat the sinister purposes of the Ragalk, or of evil spirits. Neither the Ragalk nor the Marrngit occupy a position apart from the ordinary life of the people, nor do they exercise any special functions in the ceremonial life of the tribe.

628 765 778 Magic is also believed to operate through an article known as "Maiyabala." When a man dies or is killed, a scrap of one of his bones, or a piece of one of his weapons or utensils, is given by one of his near relatives to each of his friends. This article is known as a "Maiyabala," and carries with it this important significance. Every man accepting the "Maiyabala" places himself under the obligation of doing his best to avenge the death of the deceased. I have known men who have allowed themselves to be persuaded into accepting the "Maiyabala," to be later deeply troubled when they have considered the probable consequences of their action. There is no way of escaping the obligation, and these men have thus made themselves party to a serious quarrel which probably does not concern them.

[672] 765 778 When a man, in fulfilment of this obligation, kills another, he is usually relieved from personal responsibility in the matter, the magical property of the "Maiyabala," by directing the man's spear and giving strength to his throw, being regarded as the actual cause of the killing. The Maiyabala is also worn as a charm, and is believed to assist the wearer in fighting or in the pursuit of game, the idea being that the spirit of the dead man reinforces and assists that of the wearer of this relic.

775 Closely allied to the above are some of the beliefs concerning the "Mali," or lesser spirits, of men who have been killed. When a man has killed another it is believed that the "Mali" of the slain seeks to enter the person of the slayer, the idea here being that, by overcoming the man's body, the victor has also overcome his spirit, which now seeks to serve its new master. Numbers of men of my acquaintance claim to have passed through this experience.

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
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The entrance of the "Mali" is said to produce a kind of trance, and to be accompanied by severe abdominal pains, caused by the movements of the "Mali" within the man. The fact of its entrance is always known, as the man suddenly becomes big and strong, efficient as a fighter, and lucky in his quest for game. 775 [753]

"The pessimist sees a difficulty in every opportunity, the Christian should see an opportunity in every difficulty."

Dr. S. M. Zwemer.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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as far as the women in the main camp are officially concerned, are "swallowed by the Snake". Theoretically, they are not supposed to return to the society of women until they are re-born at the end of the Kunapipi. Old men "chase the Snake back" into the sacred ground, where it swallows the initiates; thus they avert the disaster of the whole main camp's being swallowed by Julunggul. This part of the ritual reveals a propitiatory aspect; the initiates "are given" to the Julunggul in order to save the rest of the camp.

Later that night the men return, having left the boys in the protection of their guardians; they tell the women (particularly the initiates' mothers, mothers' sisters and mothers' mothers), "All the young boys have gone to-day; Julunggul has swallowed them up". And the women wail, singing the clan songs of the initiates, as if they were dead. In practice, the women do wail, as they do in the *djunggawon* when the boys are taken out to the sacred ground by the men; but in theory it is said that "the women don't cry, for they might become sick", since Julunggul might be antagonized, thinking the women objected to her methods. "She might return and swallow them too".

On the two following nights, the same events take place: Julunggul comes towards the camp, her voice is heard, and more young initiates are taken out. This continue until all the initiates are collected on the sacred ground; and a sequence of totemic dancing takes place, "teaching" the young boys. Some of this dancing takes place before dawn; intermittent singing and acting continue all night, while the women return the calls of the men from the main camp, or cry out when they hear the hum of the bullroarer. The cry of the women is the cry of the Wauwalak when they saw Julunggul; and when they dance, their dancing is similar to that of the Wauwalak, trying to stop the progress of the Snake. The *jiritja* snake men dance to represent the snakes who watched Julunggul swallowing the Wauwalak. The totemic animals, birds and vegetables that are sung and danced at morning and evening rituals are those seen by the Wauwalak, or collected by them for food. These, it will be remembered, became *mareiin*, sacred, when they left the Wauwalak and joined their ceremonial leader, Julunggul, in Muruwul well.

A little later the men, who have spent part of the evening on the sacred ground, leave this place, and dance with lighted paperbark torches towards the main camp. On their way they meet the women, crouched under conically shaped mats, termed *ngainmara*.[5] Two old women walk up and down, calling out the names of foods which at

5. The *ngainmara*, made of plaited pandanus, is now rarely seen in native camps of this region, having been superseded by blankets. It was once (as mentioned in Chapter I *c*) an important part of a woman's equipment, used for providing shade, for a protection against mosquitoes and sandflies, and for a temporary shelter for a menstruating girl. Symbolically, it represented the uterus, and this aspect is treated in detail in the Djanggawul cycle. (*Vide* R. Berndt, *Djanggawul*, for publication).

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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of the ground, but is careful not to look over towards his wife. 796
Both of these variations are known at Yirrkalla, but are recog- 786
nized as taking place outside their own Kunapipi area.
A man or woman will rarely refuse the ritual Kunapipi obligations 837
of having coitus, or giving and receiving presents. Their frank attitude towards the question of sexual relations, and their understanding of the importance of such ritualized copulation, predetermines their full acceptance. Moreover, there is an obvious content of enjoyment, for both men and women are stimulated by the pre-coitus dancing and interchange of jokes. Should there be refusal, [832] caused perhaps by the dislike of a certain Kunapipi partner, that man or woman is soon obliged to conform, for the thwarted partner will threaten to send Julunggul to the other and so cause sickness. [753]

The initial incestuous relations of the Wauwalak Sisters with [773] clansmen, as we have seen, are cited in explanation of this ceremonial copulation.[15] There is also the deeper intent of fertility: the [789] symbolic spiritual fructification of the Mother. There is a tendency to regard this sexual exchange of wives as providing an element of "danger"; for here are men and women copulating with the wives and husbands of others, virtually under their eyes and with one [835] another's full (that is, in theory) sanction, and in "older times" with tabu-ed relatives. All is made possible on the sacred ground, under the "divine" sanction of the great Ancestral Beings and the Mother. The inclusion of ceremonial copulation in the Kunapipi is said to "raise its status to that of *mari* (mother's mother's brother, of the older generation)", but not to the high position retained by the *ngu:rlmak*, or the *dua* and *jiritja nara* Djanggawul and Laintjung rituals.

* * * *

On the morning following the ritual intercourse, the final group of 796
Kunapipi ceremonies is performed.
Just before dawn, all the *dua* men assemble at one end of the sacred 881
ground, and the *jiritja* men at the other. The women have returned 778
to the main camp, and the young initiates are sitting with their guardians. All the men are painted with white paint, spraying it over [302] one another from their mouths; and most have spears. They begin to clap their spears, one against the other, and dance towards each other, changing sides. The bullroarers begin to twirl at this juncture, and the women answer their sound from the main camp. The men's [535] dancing continues till sunrise, when the two moiety groups dance down to the boundary between the ceremonial ground and the main [646] camp, taking the young boys with them. Here, to the accompaniment of the bullroarers' sound and ritual calling, they erect the

15. *Vide* L. Warner, *op. cit.* pp. 307–8, who also provides a native interpretation of this aspect.

237 nificance and *must* be accumulated by the hunter.[15] This
778 fat, as well as the feathers of the birds mentioned above, are known as *tjärnbin* and play an important part in the ceremonies called *kunabibbi* and *ŋulmark*. The long bones, bills and some of the flight feathers of these birds are also accumulated and wrapped with paperbark into neat parcels called *täbarr*.

264 About midday, or at the conclusion of a drive for game
512 or fish, the people look for a suitable place to make a fire and to cook such small game as opossums, bandicoots, native cats, "goanna" or fish, as they may have secured. If they are hungry, some vegetable food may also be cooked, but the principal meal of the day is eaten in the evening
461 after the return to camp. For a couple of hours during the
512 heat of the day the natives rest. But they are rarely idle; even during these halts the men may often be seen squatting before little fires, making or repairing spears or other weapons. The women also take advantage of such respites to work at the string or mesh baskets which they carry rolled up in a half finished state, just as a white woman may take up knitting or other handiwork in moments of leisure.

[777] [15] Failure to do this would bring "bad luck", a ritual visitation, upon the hunter or on the people. The *tjärnbin*, the name given to the fat and also to certain of the feathers of the mammals and birds which have been mentioned, is believed to carry, in concentrated form, the *marr* or "spiritual power" of the animals. To waste this
● [753] *tjärnbin* is to risk a ritual visitation, and if it is held for very long there is a too great concentration of *marr* so that the people will
[751] become sick. To dispel this *marr*, to avert the danger of sickness from it, a ceremony called *kunabibbi* must be held in which the fat and the feathers which are called *tjärnbin* are used and the danger
[777] is averted. It may be noted also that failure to cook game which has been killed, such as the flesh of one of the kangaroos, will bring "bad luck" and impair the *tjämbait*, the prowess or "good luck" of the hunter.

11: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1933 OI17 Murngin OI17

the spot selected. After a good deal of massaging, which no doubt affords some relief, he applies his mouth to the spot and sucks vigorously. Next he takes a mouthful of water from a vessel placed in readiness, blows some of the water on to the affected part, and then convincingly ejects from his mouth some foreign substance which has been injected into the man by the *mali* (grosser spirit) of some *morkwoi* (dead person).[3] I have seen such things as small stones, pieces of charcoal, bones of animals, and bits of wood thus extracted. This foreign body is shown to the patient who, nothing doubting, immediately feels relieved and cheerfully pays the "doctor" his fee.

Some years ago our little boy was suffering from a distressingly severe attack of inflamed eyes, and a kindly old *marrngit*, through a fellow-tribesman, requested that he might be allowed to operate on him. Conscious of his kindly thought, and knowing he could do no injury to the little chap, Mrs. Webb and I consented. He thereupon came up to our house, and after carefully massaging the child's head for a while, clapped his huge bearded mouth to his temple, sucked hard for a moment or two, then turned round and ejected a mouthful of blood. The child was at least no worse after the operation. The *marrngit's* explanation of the affliction was that a donkey which constitutes one of our possessions, had come up, hung his head over the fence, and stared at the child playing inside the yard. The little chap had naturally looked at the donkey, whose evil gaze had done the damage.

The "virtue" or healing magic believed to be contained in the water of the ceremonial or totemic *mangotʃi* (pool or well) of the horde is made available by a ceremony known as *wontjurr*. In this district the ceremonial totemic centre is always some pool, well, or spring of water. In the ceremony of *wontjurr* a representation of this *mangotʃi* is made by scooping out a circular hollow in the sand. In this hollow the patient is placed, while all round sit his fellow-tribesmen and friendly associates. A certain chant, differing for each horde, is then sung over and over again to the accompaniment of *bilma* (clack-sticks) and *yiraki* (drone-pipe), and as it is being sung

[3] These two terms are often used as being practically synonymous, and the conception behind them is practically equivalent to the old idea of ghost.

582 835 152 186 266 cannibalism which they regarded as indispensable to a hunter in order to maintain his prowess at a level that could earn for him the coveted title of *tjambait*.

123 During much of the time—amounting to several years—that I lived in Arnhem Land I hunted with groups of the status of horde, which often claimed one or more *marrngitmirri*. I frequently saw these men practising their cult, and was able to make a detailed study of both *marrngitmirri* and *kalka* while I lived a nomadic life with these people.

Kalka *and* Marrngit

754 The cult of the *ragalk* or *kalka—kalk'* of the Burara—, to which I have referred, is believed to be used to bring about the death of a man who has been made a scapegoat—frequently by a rite of augury—for the death of a member of an enemy horde. Often the victim will be a man against whom the deceased or his group have harboured a grievance of long standing, perhaps because he has failed to honour [688 some payment such as that obligatory to one who has been 689] present at a *ngarra*—or clan totem—ceremony, to make a ceremonial presentation of *ngata*, food (really vegetable food), or of *gerri*, goods, valuables, to the elders of this clan. Of this obligation they say 'to pay back that *marr*'—to [776 propitiate the *malli* of the culture hero whose totem is in- 782] volved. This *ngata* and the *gerri* presented by men who have attended the *ngarra* by invitation, are dedicated to the *wangarr* and are said to be *yarkomirri*, *i.e.* sacramental. Failure to discharge the obligation to make expiatory payments of the kind that I have mentioned places a man in danger of death by magic, even after a long period of time.

761 In Arnhem Land the belief is held that the death of any 754 person in full possession of his social personality is due, not to what the white man terms 'natural causes' but to the act of an enemy, often a person who is believed to bear a grudge, real or imaginary, against the deceased. Even death from sickness or drowning, from attack by shark or crocodile, and especially from snake bite, is not regarded as the primary cause, but merely the agent used by an enemy, or by a *ragalk* whose aid he has enlisted, to bring this about. The only exception to the belief about natural death is extreme old age, when, in the words of one of my informants, the people say 'time belong him now'—his time is spent, he has lived his life. Certain types of swellings [688 and deformities are believed to result from ritual visitation 776 or punishment by the *wangarr*, the totemic ancestors, for 784 the violation, even accidental or inadvertent, of a tabu, particularly on the eating of foods which are prohibited at ● 753] certain critical stages in a man or woman's relation to his family or horde, as at initiation, on the death of near kin, or during pregnancy. Boils of a type distinguished as *marlung* are believed to be due to ritual punishment and so held as proof of the violation of a tabu, usually on the eating of food that is *duyu* (tabu) at critical stages in a man's life.

753 A man in east Arnhem Land named Nyarrang pointed 776 to a large tumour on his neck and told me that it was due 773 to the *malli birlma*—*i.e.* a blow from the 'shade' or spirit of an implement called *birlma*—used today as a mallet or hammer in food-preparation by women, and 'found'

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776 originally by the Djangauwo sisters—women culture
[773] heroes, who, in their progress across east Arnhem Land, thrust their yam sticks into the ground as they walked. From each of the holes caused in this way there gushed a spring of water of a special kind called *milmindjarrk*. Certain tabus restrict the drinking of *milmindjarrk* water and my informant Nyarrang declared that the swelling on his neck was due to ritual punishment in the form of a blow from the *malli* of the heavy *birlma*, used by the Djangauwo sisters whose spirits still preside over *milmindjarrk* waters. Some time later, the effect of the blow from the *malli birlma* had become manifest in the form of a swelling. It is characteristic of these people that when 'something is wrong,' when they receive a warning in the
[787] form of an omen or portent, or when 'bad luck' attends their hunting or fishing expeditions, they look back over their lives for some incident which has caused them
[152] uneasiness or concern and which they feel may have incurred the displeasure of the *malli wangarr*, the spirits of the ancestral culture heroes.

756 The role of the *marrngitmirri* is twofold: first, to diagnose sickness or to determine the cause of death, and secondly
[776] to find a scapegoat by the aid of his *marrngit*—who, being
[787] spirits or ghosts, possess occult powers, powers to see things not visible to mortals, which they communicate to the *marrngitmirri*, who in turn passes the information to the
[682 kin of the victim. As a rule the verdict of the *marrngitmirri* is accepted without question and the people proceed to
593] select an avenger. This will be a person within the kinship horizon of the deceased—sometimes a younger brother but often a more distant relation from a clan to which, under an extension of the kinship structure, he has special obligations, which may be reciprocal.

In the marginal area adjacent to the Burara, *i.e.* close to the territorial stronghold of the *ragalk*—the *marrngitmirri*
[754] looks at once for signs of the tell-tale magic of the dreaded *kalka*, just as a man does when seeking the reason for what he accepts as ritual punishment.

754 Even in the culturally homogeneous area of north-east
756 Arnhem Land, the beliefs and ideas about the *marrngit* and
114 *marrngitmirri*, as well as about *ragalk*, vary considerably—necessarily so, in a matter which is strongly subjective. The foregoing reference to the role of the *marrngitmirri* discounts Webb's statement (*loc. cit.*) that this man 'possesses no special influence in the life of his horde or tribe.' It must be apparent that at critical times, when the sentiments of the
[753 kin of a sick or newly deceased man are aroused as they
761] are by the pronouncements of the *marrngitmirri* (which, backed by belief in his *marrngit*, are accepted without question), his influence on the horde in which he lives is one of life and death.

The Kalka *at Work*

754 The *kalka* or sorcerer is believed to be responsible for
753 bringing about the sickness and ultimate death of his
761 victim but he does not profess to diagnose sickness or injury due to magic, which is the role only of the *marrngit*. In practice, *kalka* may operate singly but more generally they work in groups of two or three. A sorcerer is likely

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to be named as a scapegoat by the *marrngitmirri* of a neighbouring group when one of its members has died, and to be killed by an avenger who has been presented with a spear, to which is attached a bone, usually a metacarpal bone, taken from the finger of the deceased. One or more of these metacarpal bones are removed after the body has been disinterred. They are cleaned and decorated with the orange-red feathers of the red-collared lorikeet (*Trichoglossus rubritorques*), *lindiritj*. One of these *maidjaballa*, as they are called, is attached by a short string to the head of the spear and becomes an avenger's pennant. When a man is presented with a spear to which the *maidjaballa* is attached in this way, he is charged with the responsibility of killing the scapegoat. This is usually done by catching the victim off guard and spearing him. Sometimes this man may defer the action for a long enough time for the injured sentiments of the group to be appeased, when a potential blood feud may be averted by an expiatory payment or by a formal ordeal by spear.

In the practice of his cult the *kalka* is believed by the people of the east to waylay his victim in the bush when he is hunting or to invite him to go on a kangaroo hunt. Sometimes the *kalka* may induce his victim to accompany him by claiming to have already killed and cached a kangaroo—which was too heavy for him to carry back to camp alone.

Once he has succeeded in getting the victim away from his friends, the *kalka* has little difficulty in catching him off guard and overcoming him. Generally he will have made a rendezvous with other *kalka* in the bush. These men overpower their victim by knocking him down, then they open his mouth and pull down his lower lip to expose the alveolar border into which they insert the *kandjurma*—made from a long thin piece of ironwood called *maipin*, or from the long bones of a flying fox or the fibula of a kangaroo, sharpened to a fine point. Informants overlooked the fact that in this approach the *kandjurma* would strike the bone of the mandible or lower jaw. To the distal end of this *kandjurma* is attached a rope of human hair which is placed in a shallow trough of tea-tree bark called *tannia* in which the blood drained from the heart is said to be collected. The *kalka*, now aided by his confederates, has rendered his victim unconscious or comatose. As the *kandjurma* is inserted into the heart, which is approached by way of the dorsal aorta, the victim is said to emit a series of deep husky rasping intakes of breath. Each time this occurs the *kalka* pauses, but as soon as it ceases he thrusts the long, sharply pointed *kandjurma* a little farther down the great vessel towards the heart (*tortork*).[4]

The *kandjurma* is guided and shielded by the left hand of the *kalka* as he uses his right hand to thrust the point down to reach the heart.

Meanwhile one of the *kalka* places the *tannia* close to the victim. He now holds the man's head while the blood runs into it; the *kalka* then grasps his victim around the waist and squeezes his body so that all the blood is drained from it, after which he removes the *tannia* and hides it. The blood collected is made into small parcels wrapped in paper bark and either used in ritual cannibalism or rubbed

[p.100(B)]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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vital organs, and it made off into the scrub. He followed the wounded animal, and in the ensuing scuffle was himself seriously wounded, and had his thigh laid open by the protruding spearhead. However, he killed the animal and cooked some of it to take back to camp, and propped the rest in the branches of a tree. When he came limping into camp, his friends saw the blood and asked what had happened. Some of them went off to get the meat, but his closest relatives said with characteristic and genuine feeling: 'We will not eat that meat; it has Marjirry's blood on it.' It was clearly a case of 'mumbakuta' and the spilt blood had to be ceremonially washed away and his body purified by washing in a totemic well. Marjirry's father began the ceremony by declaring: 'No one is to eat that meat except my son's wife and children; it is mumbakuta.' He scooped a hole in the sand resembling his horde's totemic well, and when the rest of the kangaroo arrived, the closest relatives ate it, carefully buried the bones and skin in the 'well', and lit a fire over it so that the camp-dingoes could not desecrate them.

By the end of the next week Marjirry felt better, so his father told him that he must 'wash' and that he would make him 'koota-koota', or ceremonially clean, in their totemic well. Everyone sat by the 'well' containing the buried bones and skin. After some singing and dancing, Marjirry stood over the well whilst the leader 'sang' the horde's thanks to the spirit-Ancestors for restoring him to health. Sand was poured over him, and he washed imaginary blood off his body and smeared himself with red ochre. However, before the affair could be considered finished with, Marjirry again went hunting and brought his first kill to his father, who announced that everyone could eat it, and in the ensuing meal thanked them for having observed the tabu. To break this tabu and eat the victim's food, or use his utensils, is a breach of etiquette and a violation of sacred and personal

752 honour; sickness overtakes the offender, or the father may
362 spear him.
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[053]

New spears, knives, axes, and canoes are sometimes
778 pronounced sacred and thereby impregnated by tabu.
784 Custom provides for the use of such articles in inter-tribal
411 presentations, and any responsible man may prepare them
224 and paint his horde's totem on them. Nanyan, a youth of
[431] the Gerrkee horde, spent most of his time at Yirrkala, and
[531] I watched him make a spear and 'declare' it sacred. But the tabu could not be completed till he had killed with it, and when he speared a kangaroo it automatically became tabu to all but the men of his horde. After the meat had been eaten the oldest man present completed the ceremony by painting totemic symbols on it for Nanyan. He prized his spear and used it for a time in hunting; and because it had
[531] been ceremonially 'painted', the tabu was under control, and women and children of his own horde were allowed to
[562] eat meat killed with it, though on no account could the kill be shared with females from other hordes.

[431] Nanyan later presented his spear to a man of the Kumite horde who had no totemic or marriage link with the Gerrkee. This 'alien' appreciated the courtesy and used the spear freely in the hunt, but only the initiated men could eat the
[562] food, the women and children not being allowed to share in the kill, because their horde had no associations with the spear's totemic centre. Finally the spear was formally returned to Nanyan who put it to normal use in procuring food for himself and family.

784 On patrol I visited a horde camped among the casuarinas
126 near Caledon Bay, and in the evening saw the men return
562 with a canoe loaded with fish. During the unloading I noticed that the women and children deliberately kept away and ignored the splendid haul, and I was told that the canoe

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

FROM HAND TO MOUTH

Old men sometimes demand a further treatment of the food, and the partly cooked damper is then kneaded into a wide, thin layer and rolled into bark before being re-baked. By this final process the 'ngutu' becomes impregnated by tabu, and only fully initiated males may eat it. I have seen men delirious in the cycad season; though not showing other ill effects, they do not recover for several weeks. Kuninyal suffered in this way, and I remember he was the sport of the camp and became thin and haggard through not being able to hunt for himself. It was openly stated that he had been eating half-cooked cycad cakes.

Many nuts, berries, and fruits are found in the bush, but they are not very enticing. Some are as large as cherries, but the majority are the size of currants. Wild cashew nuts, ripening at the end of the dry season, are the most favoured of all. Small bright red and orange cashew fruit are attached to kidney-shaped brown nuts which are full of prussic acid. A thick skin on the nut also contains acid, and it is roasted to extract the kernel, which tastes like a tiny potato with a peanut flavour. In the roasting process, acid spurts from the fire, and fumes in the smoke severely burn anyone near by. Children develop scaly blisters, and women tending the cooking fires receive extensive burns.

'Larrani' trees, with their grey branches and large green waxy leaves, make a gay sight when they are loaded with bunches of ripe red fruit. The fruit looks like red apples, but they have large woody kernels and very little flesh. Large quantities are gathered, and hunters use them to slake their thirst; but I must confess to finding that their astringency only increased my desire for water.

Another popular fruit comes from the beautiful East Indian tamarind tree, which thrives and bears prolifically around old Macassar watering-places. The seed pods are filled with a pleasant acidulous brown pulp which can be stored, but nomads strip the trees and eat the fruit long before it is ripe.

755 collecting shellfish, and to cure the child he had pummelled the stomach, subduing the parasite and sucking it out in an invisible form.

[164] A persistent epidemic of dysentery was making its way through the Yirrkala camp, and in desperation I finally dosed the two hundred occupants with castor oil, had all shelters burnt and a new camp made on the opposite side of the creek. There were no further applications for medicine, which suggested that everyone had recovered, and upon inquiry I was complacently told that there could be no further sickness, for on the night following the castor oil episode, the marrnggit had conducted a magical 'sing' and had put a spell on the mischievous spirit that had caused the trouble.

164 152 Aboriginal stamina in privation and suffering is proverbial, and the wounded exhibit stoicism and endurance beyond belief. Usually the only indication of suffering is in the flexing of muscles and the rolling of the head. Internal complaints, pains, and epidemics are much more likely to prove fatal, for they cannot be seen as can an open wound.

753 Imagination plays a big part with internal troubles, and the victim, thinking he is under an evil spell, prepares to die.

825 Yulengor have great fear of venomous snakes, and to show their contempt for non-venomous and edible varieties they insert the head upside down between their teeth and dislocate the vertebrae by jerking down with their hands. In Arnhem Land there are two varieties of venomous brown snakes in addition to the death-adder; although they are not as numerous as might be expected, they are by no means uncommon. One afternoon when I was burning a fire-break round an eight-acre paddock I killed seven death-adders.

752 755 825 Snake-bite can only be treated by first capturing the snake. A forked stick is held behind its head and is later replaced by the string by which it is suspended from a tree. On no account must the snake be killed, for if it is even injured the

757 [824] is swallowed, poured over the body, and into the nose and ears. It is said to be a purgative.

752 Toothache is unusual, for teeth are strong and well developed and are constantly exercised in masticating tough meat and fibrous foods. It was explained that if a tooth were to ache so badly that a kangaroo catch could not be eaten, the tooth would be treated, to temporarily quieten [824] it for the feast, by packing around it shavings from the wood of the 'moinjortj' tree.

757 Severe coughs and colds are seasonal and are aggravated by dipping the patient in a creek or by pouring water over [824] him to ease an accompanying fever. Coughs are also treated by sipping a mixture from the inner-bark of the stringy-bark eucalypt and a sweet grass soaked in water. Nests of green tree-ants are dropped on hot coals to stupefy the insects so [825] that they can be collected and soaked in water. Their particularly high content of formic acid remains in the water, and the mixture is renowned as a cure for a cough. A further potion is made from the greenish, high-smelling wax in wild-honey nests, which is mixed with water. It is said to taste like certain patent cough remedies and to produce a mild stinging sensation in the throat. When colds have settled in the lungs, a fire is made from pandanus palm nuts and covered with leaves and wet sand; water is poured over the sufferer, and leaves and hot sand are piled on him. It is said that the sickness is sweated out, and that the evil ● [753] spirit 'jumps out of his mouth to escape the heat'.

Headaches seem to be due to constipation, and to relieve them a certain white-ant nest is taken from the mangrove trees and burnt on the windward side of the patient. After inhaling the smoke for a day, he is said to lose the pain, or, to put it more strikingly: 'The sickness escapes from the smoke through his eyes, nose and ears.' Finally, he washes himself with sand or water—and, as an old man naïvely suggested, after listening to my informant: 'He has a smoke.'

754 several women and children were dead; other sufferers were retching, and rolling on the beach in agony.

When an epidemic of whooping cough from Darwin swept eastwards through Arnhem Land and caused many deaths, [164] a horde on the Crocodile Islands explained that an enemy [776] had released the curse from a tree containing the spirit of the common cough. By stripping the bark from the tree he uncovered the evil spirit and sent it to the camps of his enemies to afflict them. On the other hand he could have broken up the tree, burnt it, and sent the smoke to blow over them.

754 Old Manimba, lame and half-blind, was familiar with ●753 magical arts and an acknowledged rain-maker. He also 789 claimed to have control over mosquitoes and boils. Spirits 825 of both plagues inhabit the pandanus palm, and when these [776] prickly fronds drop off in the wet season the mosquito and boil spirits are released to swarm over the land. Manimba usually gets what he wants by threatening to send some sort of plague. To rouse unseasonal mosquitoes he pulls a green pandanus frond and instructs its mosquito-spirit to swarm into the country of his enemies, and it is done. He can call up boils by making a fire under the palm and directing the smoke to blow over and inflict certain camps.

754 Death in any but the very young or old is attributed to evil 761 magic and the first consideration is to fix the blame, for 787 someone must die for it. When a man is killed his lesser [775] spirit follows the killer. Marrngeit, or benevolent witch- [756] doctors, claim to be able to see these enslaved ghosts, and they are called on for an opinion. They sometimes make startling revelations to the relatives, though not always without serving their own ends. I remember one marrngeit acted on his own initiative, and asked the relatives: 'Do you know why your brother died?' And when interest and suspicion were fully aroused, he continued, 'I have seen his "mali". It is following Jimunboi, and he must